Re-interpreting the minimal foot as a domain for lenition

Katalin Balogné Bérces

Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary

bbkati@yahoo.com

24-26 May 2012

Roadmap:

① **Data** from lenition sub-systems in varieties of English
- ↳ lenition may be confined to the "minimal foot"
- ↳ implicational relation among lenition systems such that lenition outside this minimal domain implies lenition within

② **A representational solution**:
(i) a CVCV skeleton
(ii) two lateral relations: government (a destructive force) and licensing (supporting segmental expression of the target)
(iii) stressed vowels distract the licensing charge of the following vowel
(iv) long nuclei are VCV sequences exhibiting right-to-left V-to-V licensing

① The “Withgott effect”

- tapping/flapping: the ‘classical’ pattern: roughly, in intervocalic position whenever the second vowel is unstressed
- but: Withgott (1982): tap suppression in certain positions (for certain speakers):

flapped t	aspirated t
*capi**t**alístic*	*mili**t**arístic*
	*sani**t**isátion*
	*mono**t**onícity*

- cf. *capital* vs. *military*, *sanitize*, *monotone*: untapped t in the derivative where there is untapped t in the base due to stress on the syllable whose onset the t is
- also found in morphologically simple *Medi**t**erránean*, *Winni**p**esáukee*, *Navra**t**ilóva*, *abra**c**adábra*, etc.: aspiration (instead of lenition)
- => the problem of the third syllable in a dactyl: foot-based solution: cyclic analysis: (capita)(listic) but (mili)(ta(ristic)) + adjunction of the stray syllable to the right: (abra)(ca(dabra)) etc. (Withgott 1982, Jensen 2000, Davis 2003, 2005[1])
- N.B. only applicable to nonfinal dactyls

[1] Expletive infixation data seem to support these footings, cf. *Winne-frickin-pesaukee* and *Winnepe-frickin-saukee*; *mili-fuckin'-taristic* and *milita-fuckin'-ristic,* but *capita-frickin-listic* and **capi-frickin-talistic* (Davis 2003)

① The "*competitive* chain of reduction"

- Harris and Kaye (1990: 261): t̲-lenition in New York English (tapping) and London (glottalling): two successive potential lenition sites, e.g.

competitive:
compe[t]i[t]ive
compe[ʔ]i[t]ive
compe[ʔ]i[ʔ]ive
*compe[t]i[ʔ]ive

- the second can only reduce if the first reduces, too
- (parallel results obtained for tapping in NYC)
- [Harris and Kaye: "a 'chain' of reduction […] along lines of government"]
- can be reinterpreted as **weak** vs. **semiweak**: stronger tendency to lenite in weak position (*compét̲itive*), semiweak (*compéti̲t̲ive*) is more resistant to reduction (terminology introduced for Dutch by van Oostendorp (2000: 147-148))
- the "Withgott effect" revisited: Steriade (2000: 322-326, endnote 4): tap suppression does not obtain in syllables that directly follow the tonic: *sta̲t̲ístic – sta̲t̲istícian*

Interim conclusions:

- the immediate post-tonic position is weak, the third syllable in a dactyl is semiweak
- there is a “minimal domain” for lenition (comprising the foothead and the weak position): lenition outside that domain implies lenition within
- weak = recessive position within this domain; semiweak = recessive position outside this domain

① **The problems with "unfooted" syllables** (Balogné Bérces 2011a)

- *abra<u>ca</u>dabra*, *<u>po</u>tato*, *competi<u>tive</u>*: adjunction of stray syllable to the right or left? there is no uniform direction for adjunction
- degenerate (unary/subminimal) feet? Headless/unstressed feet? Remain unfooted (immediately dominated by higher projection)? – all of these raise theoretical questions
- plus: further asymmetries in pretonic unstressed position:
  <u>initially</u>: C is strong: *potáto* (strong aspiration)
  V is weak: *políce*, *suppóse*: pre-tonic syncope is possible; may even lexicalize: *pram* (from *perámbulator*), *s'pose*, *praps*
  <u>medially</u>: C is semiweak: *mìli<u>t</u>arístic*, *Nàvra<u>t</u>ilóva*, *abra<u>c</u>adabra*, etc. ("Withgott-effect")
  V is semiweak: affected by reduction to a lesser extent: *Tatam<u>a</u>gouchi* (Burzio 1994) + pre-stress syncope is blocked/restricted: *milit'ristic*? *nation'lize*? (lexicalized examples?)

	initial	medial
consonant	stronger: *<u>p</u>otáto*, *<u>p</u>olíce*	weaker: *capi<u>t</u>alistic/mili<u>t</u>aristic* (cf. *be<u>tt</u>er*)
vowel	weaker: *p<u>o</u>táto*, *p<u>o</u>líce* (+ *pram*, *s'pose*, *praps*)	stronger: ?*milit'ristic/nation'lize*, *Tatam<u>a</u>gouchi*

① Splitting ‘intervocalic’ into post-short and post-long[2]

phonological patterns which:

- involve segmental changes which are clearly of the ‘lenition’ type, and
- occur in an intervocalic environment, but only if the preceding vowel is short
- the ultimate finding: the “minimal domain” of lenition is even smaller

The phenomena all derive from once-active synchronic lenitions. These lenitions are not all still clearly synchronically active, but, if not, the diachrony is clear and the split intervocalic patterning is indubitable.

[2] This section is based on joint work with **Patrick Honeybone**. For more discussion and more examples of the post-short/post-long distinction, incl. data for spirantization and from dialects of German, see Balogné Bérces – Honeybone (to appear).

Example 1: **Northern English T-to-R**

(see, for example, Wells 1982, Broadbent 2008, etc.)

- occurs in dialects from the Midlands to the North of England
- affects only words with /t/, deriving the typical rhotic of the variety
- affects mostly only word-final occurrences of /t/
- Wells (1982: 370): t → r / [short V] __# V i.e. only after short vowels
- it is *very* lexically restricted: most common in only *it*, *not*, *what*, *but*, *let*, *get/got*, *at*, *that*; it is possible but less common in *fit*, *cut*, *hit* (and a handful of others)

[ʃʊtdaʊn]	*shut down*	[ʃʊɹʊp]	*shut up*
[gɛtdaʊn]	*get down*	[gɛɹɒf]	*get off*

However, its parent process (cf. nineteenth-century descriptions (Ellis 1889 and Wright 1892) in Broadbent 2008): a productive, non-lexically-specific phonological process which:

- occurs intervocalically
- but only if the preceding vowel is short: long/complex nuclei block it

Example 2: **Lenisisation in Scouse diddification** (Honeybone 2010)

- found in the dialect of English spoken in Liverpool (aka 'Scouse')
- templatic truncation which produces hypocoristics
- productive
- only the first consonant of the base is preserved in the diddified form; if it is a fricative, lenisisation can kick in: e.g., /s/ → [z]

best friend	bɛstfrɛnd	bɛzi
mustard	mʊstəd	mʊzi
Leece street	li:stɹi:θ	li:si
ice cream	aɪskxɹi:m	aɪsi

Lenisisation:

- occurs intervocalically
- but only if the preceding vowel is short: long/complex nuclei block it

Example 3: **New Zealand English tapping/flapping** (Bye & de Lacy 2008: 98)

- NZE Basilect (informal/"broad") tapping follows the 'classical' pattern
- NZE Acrolect (formal/"cultivated"):

a. Flapping after a short stressed vowel and before a vowel

[hǽɾə]	'hatter'	[kǽɾi]	'catty'
[ɹəgǽɾə]	'regatta'	[tʰæ̀ɾəməgútʃi]	'Tatamagouchee'

b. No flapping after a stressed long vowel or stressed diphthong

[bá:tə]	'barter'	[mí:tə]	'metre'
[kəmpjú:tə]	'computer'	[ɹáɪtə]	'writer'
[páʊtə]	'pouter'		

c. No flapping after unstressed vowels

[hɔ́spətəl]	'hospital'	[tʰɛ́ɹətən]	'Terreton'

In its lexical instantiation, NZE Acrolect tapping occurs:

- only foot-internally
- and only if the preceding vowel is short: long/complex nuclei block it

From a purely descriptive point of view:

- classical lenition taxonomies may need to be amended to include subtypes of the "weak(er)" phonological position in stress-sensitive lenition systems, along at least two dimensions:
  - (i) **distance from the foothead**;
  - (ii) **length of the preceding vowel**.

This is justified by dialectal/register differences in varieties of English:

in certain systems *city* but not *vanity*, *latter* but not *later* will lenite

(cf. Balogné Bérces 2008, 2011a-b)

Upon closer inspection:

- (i) and (ii) are related and collapsible: lenition may be confined to the "minimal foot" (the bimoraic minimal string reminiscent from minimal word phenomena)
- implicational relation among lenition systems: lenition outside this minimal domain implies lenition within → smaller/no variability is expected within this domain; the parametric variation outside this domain is due to more/less strict positional faithfulness / lenition inhibition (Balogné Bérces 2011b)

② A representational solution

(i) a CVCV skeleton (Lowenstamm 1996 etc.)
(ii) two lateral relations: government (a destructive force) and licensing (supporting segmental expression of the target) (Ségéral and Scheer 1999 etc.)

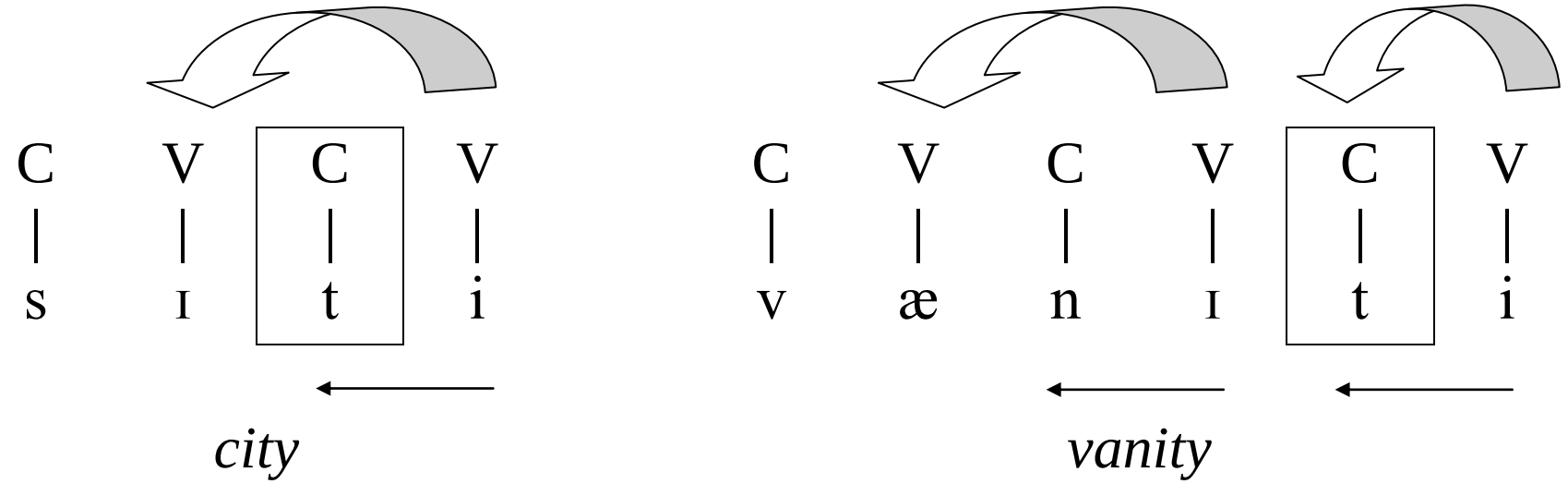
Further assumptions:
(i) stressed vowels distract the licensing charge of the following vowel (Balogné Bérces 2008)
(ii) long nuclei are VCV sequences exhibiting right-to-left V-to-V licensing (e.g., Szigetvári 1999: 72)

↳ properly derives a ternary distinction between

- licensed position (phonologically strong),
- governed position (within the "bimoraic minimum"), and
- licensed-governed position (a weak position outside the "minimal foot" domain).

② A representational solution

in certain systems *city* but not *vanity*, *latter* but not *later* will lenite



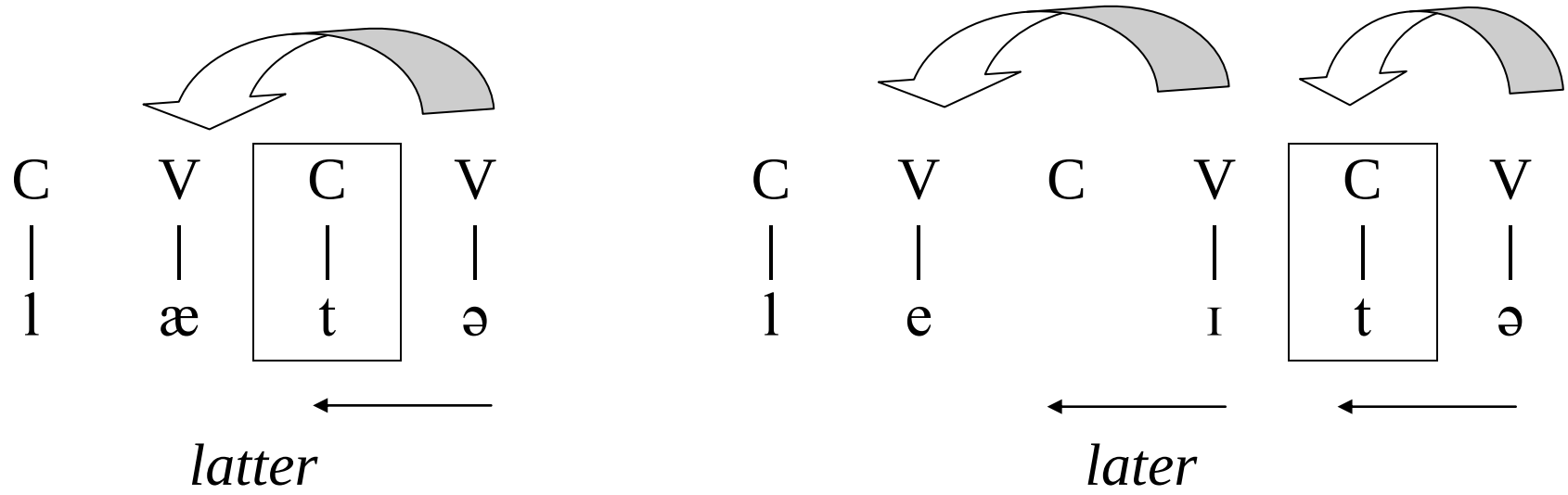
System A: all governed C's (= weak and semiweak positions) lenite

System B: governed C's (= weak position) lenite; in licensed-governed C's (= semiweak position) lenition is inhibited

(* System C, etc.)

② A representational solution

in certain systems *city* but not *vanity*, *latter* but not *later* will lenite



System A: all governed C's (= weak and semiweak positions) lenite

System B: governed C's (= weak position) lenite; in licensed-governed C's (= semiweak position) lenition is inhibited

(* System C, etc.)

References

Balogné Bérces, K. 2008. Strict CV phonology and the English cross-word puzzle. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr Müller.

Balogné Bérces, K. 2011a. Pretonic unstressed syllables in English. Paper presented at 19mfm, 19-21 May 2011.

Balogné Bérces, K. 2011b. Lenition in English: discussed threadbare? CASTL Colloquium, Tromsø, 29 September 2011.

Balogné Bérces, K. and P. Honeybone To appear. Splitting 'intervocalic'. Acta Linguistica Hungarica.

Broadbent, J. 2008. t-to-r in West Yorkshire English. English Language and Linguistics 12: 141-168.

Burzio, L. 1994. Principles of English stress. Cambridge: CUP.

Bye, P. and P. de Lacy. 2008. Metrical influences on fortition and lenition. In: J. Brandao de Carvalho et al. (eds.) Lenition and fortition. Berlin: de Gruyter. 173-206.

Davis, S. 2003. The footing of dactylic sequences in American English. In Takeru Homna, Masao Okazaki, Toshiyuki Tabata, and Shin-ichi Tanaka (eds.) A New Century of Phonology and Phonological Theory. Tokyo: Kaitakusha. 277-289.

Davis, S. 2005. "Capitalistic" vs. "militaristic": The paradigm uniformity effect reconsidered. In L. Downing, T. A. Hall, and R. Raffelsieffen (eds.) Paradigms in phonological theory. Oxford: OUP.

Harris, J. and J. Kaye 1990. A tale of two cities: London glottalling and New York City tapping. The Linguistic Review 7: 251-274.

Honeybone, P. 2010. A non-predictable template with subsegmental specification: diddificating truncation in Liverpool English. Paper presented at OCP7, Nice.

Jensen, J. 2000. Against ambisyllabicity. Phonology 17.2: 187-235.

Lowenstamm, J. 1996. CV as the only syllable type. In J. Durand and B. Laks (eds.) Current trends in phonology: Models and methods. European Studies Research Institute, University of Salford Publications: 419-442.

Ségéral, P. and T. Scheer 1999. The Coda Mirror. Ms., Université de Paris 7 and Université de Nice.

Steriade, D. 2000. Paradigm uniformity and the phonetics-phonology boundary. In: J. Pierrehumbert and M. Broe (eds.) Papers in Laboratory Phonology. Vol.5. Cambridge, CUP: 313-334.

Szigetvári, P. 1999. VC Phonology: A theory of consonant lenition and phonotactics. PhD dissertation, MTA/ELTE, Budapest.

van Oostendorp, M. 2000. Phonological projection. A theory of feature content and prosodic structure. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wells, J. 1982. Accents of English. Cambridge: CUP.

Withgott, M. M. 1982. Segmental evidence for phonological constituents. Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.